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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 YAOUNDE 001109

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [CM](#)
SUBJECT: CAMEROON: BOLD STROKE FOR COMPETENCE,
ANTI-CORRUPTION IN NEW GOV'T

REF: A. YAOUNDE 1090
[1](#)B. YAOUNDE 1068 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. YAOUNDE 1036 (NOTAL)
[1](#)D. YAOUNDE 1012 (NOTAL)
[1](#)E. YAOUNDE 865 (NOTAL)
[1](#)F. YAOUNDE 732 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Poloff Tad Brown for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. President Biya on September 7 ordered a major cabinet reshuffle, dismissing 14 ministers -- including a number of the most notoriously corrupt and inept -- and refashioning two ministries to create a Ministry of Finance and a Ministry of Economy, Planning and Rural Development. This was the bold move many were waiting for, a stroke simultaneously against corruption and for competent governance. Cameroon's deep-seated problems of corruption and governance cannot be uprooted by the stroke of the pen, even one so bold. Nevertheless, this is possibly the most significant, promising government shakeup in Biya's 25 year tenure, and we are encouraged by the message it sends. Para 7 contains a full list of new positions; para 8 contains a full list of dismissed ministers. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) It was widely anticipated that Biya would make changes in the cabinet after the July elections for the National Assembly and municipalities. Our own conversations with senior Government of Cameroon (GRC) officials and those reported to us by other diplomats (refs a-e) suggested that the shakeup would demonstrate Biya's seriousness in dismissing the most corrupt and inept officials in his government. The new cabinet members were announced over GRC-owned CRTV radio during the Friday five o'clock news. The radio announcers were noticeably surprised by the significance of the news they were relaying, and the new government lineup dominated the weekend gossip and news talk circuits, prompting two newspapers to print special weekend issues headlining the changes.

Against Corruption

[1](#)3. (C) Most discussion thus far has focused on the dismissal of Finance Minister Polycarpe Abah Abah, considered by many to be the poster child of grand corruption (ref f). Like Abah Abah, former ministers Urbain Olaguena Awono (Health) and Jean-Marie Atangana Mebara (Foreign Affairs) were perceived as generally competent, but thoroughly corrupt. Equally corrupt but less competent was Paulin Abono Moampamb, the out-going Secretary of State for Public Works and former mayor of Yokadouma, who was allegedly given his

cabinet post last year for a fee, without Biya's knowledge, to Mebara (when Mebara was in his previous post of Secretary General at the Presidency). The dismissal of Augustin Kodock, former Minister for Planning and Rural Development and head of the Cameroon People's Union (UPC) party, was likely motivated by politics (the UPC returned no MPs to Parliament in the July elections), anti-corruption (Kodock was dogged by credible allegations of malfeasance and mismanagement), and competence (a septuagenarian in and out of government since the 1960s, Kodock was uninspiring as the dynamo of economic development). Although Post had received nothing but positive reviews for the tenure of outbound Minister of Mines Charles Sale, a prominent Cameroonian commentator confided to poloff that Sale's dismissal was triggered by his habit of soliciting personal stakes in companies seeking concessions in Cameroon.

Pro-Competence; Pro-Growth

14. (C) As previewed, the shuffle also emphasized the need to select competent individuals, especially to head those ministries with key roles in Biya's stated goal of spurring economic growth and national development. The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MINEFI) and the Ministry for Planning, Development and Technology were replaced with a Ministry of Finance (MinFin) and Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPRD). Lazare Essimi Menye, previously the Delegate Minister for the Budget in MINEFI and well regarded by the donor community, was promoted to Minister of Finance. Louis Paul Motaze, who takes up the newly created MINEPRD portfolio, is widely respected for his leadership in salvaging the National Social Insurance Fund.

YAOUNDE 00001109 002 OF 003

Incoming Foreign Minister Henri Eyebe Ayissi was most recently Inspector General for Electoral Issues at the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization and had been the Minister for Town Planning in the 1990s, while still in his 30s. He is generally reputed to be a relatively clean, competent bureaucrat.

Politics Plays a Role

15. (C) The motivation behind many of the moves remains murky, but undoubtedly politics played a part. Jean Nkuete continues as Minister of Agriculture but gains the title of Vice Prime Minister (already held by Minister for Justice Amadou Ali), most likely in recognition for the support his native West Province provided to Biya's Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) party in the July elections. Ama Tutu Muna, with whom we worked closely in her position as Secretary of State for Commerce, was promoted to Minister for

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Culture likely as a return for the CPDM's strong showing in her native Northwest Province. Reputed as a CPDM party thug in the Northwest and tarnished by his involvement in a banking scandal, Paul Atanga Nji is the most apparent "bad apple" in the new team, likely given a ministerial portfolio at the Presidency to reward his CPDM activism in the Northwest Province. Many September 10 headlines focused on the political element of the shuffle, saying Biya had sacked Abah Abah, Olaguena, and Mebara because of their alleged leadership of a secretive group working to determine Biya's successor (referred to as the "G11" in reference to 2011, the expected end of Biya's tenure).

Comment: Finally, A Sign of Political Will

16. (C) Although we bear no illusions about the resilience

of Cameroon's corruption and governance problems, the September 7 personnel changes were better for Cameroon and for USG objectives in Cameroon than we had dared hope. Arrests could follow, as many government critics say that firing corrupt officials is not enough -- the government must recover their ill-gotten gains. Some problematic members of the government remain in their positions, but several of the newcomers are well-known to us and are welcome additions. Most significant is the fact that Biya has acted, more decisively than he ever has, to root out corruption and instill improved governance, especially economic governance, in Cameroon. End comment.

17. (U) Begin list of new ministers/portfolios added in September 7 Presidential Decree (updated list of the full government will follow septel):

--Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: Jean NKUETE

--Minister of Finance: Lazare ESSIMI MENYE

--Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development: Louis Paul MOTAZE

--Minister of External Relations: Henri EYEBE AYISSI

--Minister of Culture: Ama Tutu MUNA

--Minister of Industry, Mines, and Technological Development: Badel NDANGA NDINGA

--Minister of Transport: Haounaye GOUNOKO

--Minister of Public Health: Andre MAMA FOU DA

--Minister of Communication: Jean Pierre BIYITI BI ESSAM

--Minister of State Property and Land Affairs: M. ANONG A DIBEME Pascal

--Delegate Minister, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development: Abdoulaye YAOUBA

--Delegate Minister, Ministry of Finance: Pierre TITTI

--Minister at the Presidency of the Republic: Paul ATANGA NJI

YAOUNDE 00001109 003 OF 003

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Technological Development: Gentry FUH CALISTUS

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Public Works: Hans NYETAM NYETAM

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Forests and Wildlife: Joseph Roland MATTA

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Transport: Oumarou MEFIRO

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Basic Education: Andre MANGA EWOLO

End list of new cabinet portfolios added in September 7 Presidential Decree.

18. (U) Begin list of 15 ministers dismissed in the September 7 shuffle.

--Minister of State, Minister of Culture: Ferdinand Leopold OYONO

--Minister of State, Minister of Planning and Rural Development: Augustin Frederic KODOCK

--Minister of State, Minister of External Relations: Jean Marie Atangana MEBARA

--Minister of Transport: Dakole DAISSALA

--Minister of Economy and Finance: Polycarpe ABAH ABAH

--Minister of Industry, Mines, and Technological Development: Charles SALE

--Minister of Public Health: Urbain OLAGUENA AWONO

--Minister of State Property and Land Affairs: Louis Marie ABOGO NKONO

--Minister of Communication: Ebenezer Njoh MOUELLE

--Minister Delegate, Ministry of Communication: Gervais MONDO ZE

--Minister Delegate, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Charged with Programs: Daniel Njankouo LAMERE

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Public Works: Abono Paulin MOAMPAMB

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance: Denis OUMAROU

--Secretary of State, Ministry of State Property and Land Affairs: Jean Claude ETOGO

--Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture: Abdoulaye ABOUBAKARY

End list of 15 ministers dismissed in the September 7 cabinet reshuffle.

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